

bridges

art



may 2009

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

Letter from the Editor

It seems that this year we have had a milestone anniversary in every issue and that is good news. It means our culture and organizations are alive and well.

I would like to congratulate the Chicago area folk dance ensemble, Grandis. This year the group celebrates their 50th anniversary. The hours and hours of practice and the sacrifices the dancers make often go unnoticed. May they celebrate many more anniversaries.

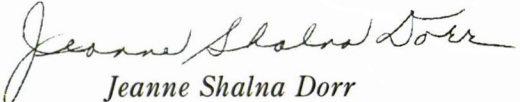
I hope many of you will be traveling to Lithuania this summer to celebrate Lithuania's 1000th anniversary. But if you are spending your vacation at home, please enjoy our photo album pages of different areas in that beautiful country. If there are any educators thinking about a trip to Lithuania perhaps you will consider joining the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.). I know you will enjoy Ann Petroliunas' article about her experiences. Hopefully, Ann will write a follow up article about her second trip this summer. Lithuania has made many accomplishments in the field of education, but there is still a way to go.

As in every issue, thank you to all the writers and those who have contributed information. Please keep in mind that unless I have written permission I am unable to publish material from your local papers or other publications. And of course, it goes without saying, thank you to you, the readers.

If you belong to a Lithuanian American Community chapter please remember to vote in the national elections. Voting will take place May 9-10 and May 16-17.

I am writing this editorial with a heavy and a broken heart. I have lost my soul mate of forty three years. Death came unexpectedly as we were planning a trip to Lithuania in June. Tim encouraged me to write my first article for Bridges almost twenty years ago and again encouraged me to accept the job as editor five years ago. He also read and reread every article and offered suggestions. I ask for your patience as I take on these tasks alone.

To each and every mother, grandmother, aunt and care giver may you have a wonderful Mother's Day.


Jeanne Shalna Dorr

Mother's Day

*Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn,
Hundreds of bees in the purple clover,
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn,
But only one mother the wide world over.*

George Cooper

BRIDGES

Lithuanian American News Journal
USPS 017131 – Published 10 times per year
(Jan./Feb. & Jul./Aug. combined).

Address of publication is:

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES,

3906 Lakeview Dr., Racine, WI. 53403

BRIDGES

is the official publication of the
Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

National Executive Board

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**THE INFORMATION CENTER FOR
HOMECOMING LITHUANIANS**

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Subscription rate is \$20.00 annually, 2 full years
for \$38.00 (US Mail serviced subscribers).
Subscriptions to other addresses are (US \$35.00),
payable in advance (US funds). Periodicals postage
paid at Racine, WI & additional locations.

Contact us on the Internet at:

<http://www.lithuanian-american.org>

Postmaster: Send any address correction
&/or changes to

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES,

78 Mark Twain Dr.
Hamilton Sq., NJ 08690

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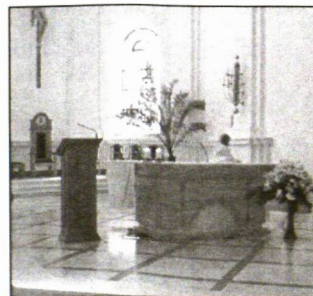
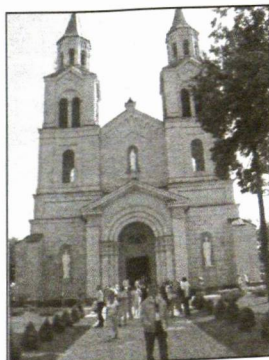
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The Hawk

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*Cover: *The photo of the interior of the new cathedral in
Vilkaviškis, Lithuania and the photos below are by
Antanas Krusinskas of Churchville, PA.*



The Memory Box

I think that each of us, far back in our minds, keeps a box of memories. I noticed as time moves on that often my memories come back more often and in more detail. It is some of these memories I would like to share with you.

Last year I wrote an article, "Mama and Her Aprons", a tribute to my grandmother.

I never envisioned the reaction so many of you would have to this article. You were so kind in sharing your own personal thoughts about your mothers and grandmothers. It seems I opened the floodgates, not only to my own memories, but to yours as well. One reader wrote that she didn't know her grandmother, but if she did, she hoped she would be just like Mama.

Mama was my beloved grandmother, Ona Vilkaitė who left Lithuania in the late 1800's as a young woman, settled in Scranton, PA and met and married my grandfather, Jurgis Salna (Shalna) who was a coal miner. By the standards of those days they had a small family, two sons and two daughters. Three of the children graduated from high school while the older daughter, at the age of thirteen left school to work in a handkerchief factory so that the "boys" and her younger sister could earn their diplomas. My aunt, who was also my Godmother, never resented the fact that she made a huge sacrifice so that others could benefit.

Now back to Mama. She gave me many important gifts, none of them costing money. Most importantly she gave me the gift of herself and the gift of time. She never made me feel like a pest and believe me, when I think back, I always needed her attention. She was never too busy and time never seemed to matter to her. In the large upstate Pennsylvania kitchen there was a small shelf over the kitchen table that held the ever faithful "Big Ben" clock, but she never let the clock rule her day. I can still remember the comforting ticking of that clock.

The Kitchen

Many memories of Mama are centered around the kitchen.

The little room that housed the sink was a separate room from the kitchen as was the pantry. The pantry held two big bins; one with white flour and the other with rye flour. This is where the dishes were stored. I don't think there were two plates that matched. When I watch some of the home remod-



Jeanne (age 4) and beloved grandmother

eling shows on television I have to chuckle at the demands for rows of expensive cabinets and granite countertops. Mama had no kitchen cabinets and forget the granite counter tops because she had no counters. Everything was done on the kitchen table with its oilcloth covering. If she thought the oilcloth might get damaged then newspapers were spread on top of it. But yet the most delicious meals came out of that kitchen. The apple pies still make my mouth water.

The kitchen didn't have a radio but she kept herself happy all day by humming, singing and praying. Dinner was started early in the day because it simmered for hours. These

houses didn't need air fresheners. The cooking, baking and fresh air from the opened windows provided everything that was needed. Need a chicken for dinner- just go out to the backyard and get one. Fresh vegetables and herbs - same place as the chickens. No problem if it's winter; down a few steps into the cellar and shelves and shelves of canned fruits and vegetables awaited you. While you were down there don't forget the crocks with the sauerkraut and the crocks with the pickles. How about kielbasa? Some steps in the opposite directions up to the third floor or attic would find smoked sausages hanging on an extended broom stick. The kitchen held two stoves; a big black coal stove and a smaller gas stove.

The ice box was on the back porch. The ice man was like Hercules as he lifted the huge blocks of ice with tongs. But then the big day arrived and Mama finally consented to the idea of an electric refrigerator which would be proudly placed in the kitchen. But this was not without apprehension and for many years she held on to the ice box... just in case. The refrigerator had an inside freezer that probably held two ice cube trays and little else. But no one, and I mean no one, was permitted to defrost this valuable item in her kitchen except my aunt's husband. This was, after all, a man's job which was performed religiously every Saturday morning while the rest of us looked on in awe.

The Bedroom

The bedroom was for sleeping. The family slept upstairs while Mama's room was off the kitchen. There was no central heat so once you went to bed you wanted to be sure you stayed there. No drinking anything at night. Who needed to go downstairs to the bathroom when the indoor winter temperatures were probably hovering around the freezing mark?

Once your feet hit the hot water bottle you were there to stay for the night. She never changed her mind about central heating and the house never had it until after she died. She just didn't trust it not to catch fire or blow up.

Mama literally went to bed with the chickens and woke with them. Why waste good daylight by staying in bed when you could be productive? Mama's bedroom had a mystique about it for me. Both my father and I were born in that room, in her bed, on 11-18. Mama's house number - 1118!

Cleaning Time

The heavy cleaning was done twice a year, spring and fall. There was no such thing as a "dust cloth". This was really a rag. It could not be mended one more time, there was no room for even one more stitch to save it. The broom was wrapped in a sparkling clean rag and the all the walls and ceilings were cleaned. Too bad for any small spider that might get in Mama's way while she was moving forward. She might as well have worn a white glove as she inspected each job she finished. The lace curtains were taken down, washed and taken out to dry on contraptions in the back yard. Here they were stretched out and attached to little nails until they dried. By today's standards it looked like a device used for torture. I can't quite remember if the curtains were starched before or after but they had enough starch to get up and walk away on their own.

The rugs were taken outside and beaten without mercy with a metal rug beater. Heaven help the odd piece of dust that might dare to linger in that rug.

Mama was by no means perfect, but I rarely can remember her getting angry. But she did have a stubborn streak as wide as the Grand Canyon. Once she had her mind fixed on something that was it. It was useless to try to make her think in another direction. I'm sure she missed her homeland, her parents and her siblings but she rarely spoke of them.

She suffered some bad times. Money was always a problem for the families of the coalminers and our family was no exception. She knew how to stretch a dollar by walking to town, several miles, to save the nickel streetcar fare.

My father was her youngest child and for several years she held him day and night while the doctors were mystified at his illness. There was no money for specialists. But somehow Mama got her miracle and he recovered. Many years later her only grandson was bedridden for several years and again her heart ached every day as the rosary beads became worn out. And again, she got her miracle.

Mama was no stick in the mud. She loved to sing and enjoyed toe tapping music. When my cousin was married Mama was too sick to travel to Massachusetts to the wedding. But at the time she thought they were entering the church, she insisted that she and my aunt share a "a little sip",

when she figured the marriage ceremony was completed they had another "little sip" and when she worked out the hour they should be toasting the bride and groom at the reception, they had their third "sip" so they could also toast the bride and groom.

One thing that Mama changed her mind about was the television set. We finally wore her down since we had to be the only holdouts in the entire city of Scranton. Then came the day the television was delivered and set up in the front room (parlor). This in itself was a minor miracle since the door to that room was never opened except on holidays and for very important company. In spite of all her earlier protests Mama became addicted. Every night when her work was done she sat down on one of the "good" chairs to watch her programs. The only problem was that one of us had to be with her at all times to translate. And remember the winter temperatures? Good heavens, it was cold in that room in the winter. She loved "I Love Lucy" and would laugh and laugh. Lawrence Welk was also a favorite, but Arthur Godfrey seemed to scare her; especially when they showed a close up. I think it was because she dozed off and awoke to a close up scene. At this point her bedtime changed and she stayed up an hour or two later.

She never read me fairy tales from a fancy book, I don't think she was able to read. But she sat with me and told me the most wonderful stories, not of princesses or princes, or toads turning into princes, but rather of her life when she was young girl living on a farm in Lithuania. She never lamented the fact that she left her parents with no chance of returning to her homeland. As the young people say today, "it is, what it is."

She raised a productive family and insisted that they vote in every election. She never complained and was grateful for the opportunities her children were given. But in all honesty - we all stood on the shoulders of those who sacrificed so much for us and gave up their families and their homeland.

I promised to finish the story of Mama in this issue, but of course, I didn't because I realized that Mama's story can never be finished. It has no end and time cannot erase it. The memory box will always be full.

Almost fifty years after her death I still find myself thinking, "Wouldn't Mama love to see this or hear that?" But I know she's watching over us at all times.

I want to thank my cousin Tony Shalna. His memories helped me jog my own. Tony lives in Massachusetts and we have been reminiscing about Mama since last year's article. And what wonderful experiences we've shared.

Jeanne Dorr

Jeanne Dorr is the Editor of Bridges and is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

Lithuanian Cemetery in Roslyn, WA

100 year

Anniversary Celebration

A full day program of Lithuanian Heritage in North Kittitas County

Saturday June 13th, 2009

Planned events for the day are as follows:

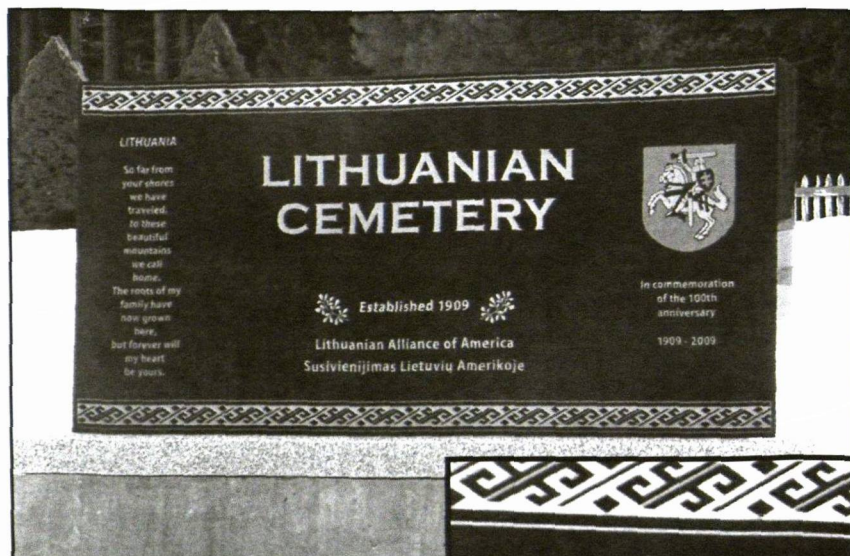
Roslyn Cemetery/Polish-Lithuanian Cemetery
11:00 am

- * Opening greeting by William (Vilius) Zalpys.
- * Blessing of the new cemetery sign.
- * Placing wreaths of Rue (Rūtų) on two newly marked children's graves by Lithuanian folk dancers.
- * Placing a wreath at the newly marked grave of Kazimieras Kurtinaitis
- * Kanklių music and folk songs by Julia Gelazis

Lithuanian Ambassador Bruzga has accepted the invitation by Seattle's Honorary Lithuanian Consul Vytautas Lapatinskas to attend the Roslyn Celebration.

Dinner and Program 5:30 pm

- * Dinner and program at the Ronald Community Club Hall (former Ronald school).
- * Program will include the historical life of the area's Lithuanian immigrants accompanied with songs, skits and slides.
- * Dancing with music by Lithuanian Vidas Svagzdys of Seattle, WA.



As a 1907 Lithuanian dance advertisement in Cle Elum said, *"The Dance will last until the last couple leaves the dance floor."*

This event is sponsored by :
The LAC, Inc.; Portland and Seattle Chapters, The Lithuanian Descendants Committee of North Kittitas County

For more information contact one of the following: About Roslyn, WA
Cle Elum-Roslyn Chamber of Commerce: www.cleelumroslyn.org
or 509-674-5958

William (Vilius) Zalpys:
zalpai999@aol.com

www.portlandlithuanians.com
seattle.lietuviu-bendruomene.org

Editor's Note:

The January/February and March 2007 issues of Bridges carried a two part article "The Lithuanian Legacy of North Kittitas County" by Vilius Zalpys.

LITHUANIA

So far from
your shores
we have
traveled,
to these
beautiful
mountains
we call
home.

The roots of my
family have
now grown
here,
but forever will
my heart
be yours.

TRIVIA QUESTION

(No.28)

The Natural

If you are a baseball fan, you probably saw the movie "THE NATURAL". Which of the following three baseball legends life story was woven into the movie?

- (a) Ted Williams (b) Eddie Waitkus (c) Babe Ruth

Answer to Trivia Quiz
on page 16

The beautiful words of this poem appear on a monument in the Lithuanian cemetery in Roslyn, WA.

Rev. Peter Burkauskas

The Sisters Of Saint Casimir... Daughters Of Mother Maria

Mother Maria Kaupaitė, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Casimir, died in Chicago on April 17, 1940. Her dedicated vocation and dreams continue to live in the lives of the young women who accepted Christ's call and became known to us as the Sisters of St. Casimir. In schools, hospitals, nursing homes and convents the presence of Mother Maria is mirrored by the talents and dedicated service of her nearly 500 daughters. Knowing them in our lives has been an edification and inspiration...



Below is an article about Sister M. Bernarda Venskus.



Sister M. Bernarda Venskus
(1902-1998)



Sister Bernarda tunes her choir to perfection

She was born in Batakiiai, Lithuania on Dec. 9, 1902. Her parents brought her to the United States at the age of one and she joined the convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir at fifteen. She studied at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago and earned a masters degree from DePaul University School of Music in 1943. While a music teacher at the girls' high school administered by the Sisters in Chicago (later to become known as Maria High School), she organized and conducted a 60-member symphony orchestra. She also composed a Symphonietta, Lithuanian Folk-Dances I and II, and a Rhapsody on Lithuanian themes for a full symphony orchestra. She wrote several variations for string orchestra, a Mass *Regina Pacis*

for four voices a *Capella*, and a Mass *Child Jesus* for three voices and organ. In addition, she translated the opera *Pagirėnai*, by Stasys Šimkus into English and helped in preparing organ accompaniment for Latin and Lithuanian hymns. Sister M. Bernarda once said of her musical career: *There is nothing more that delights than conducting an orchestra, a chorus, or both combined. The next thing close to my heart is training young people and others in instrumental or choral music. Composition, of course, tops them all.* In 1933, Sister M. Bernarda's orchestration of selections was used for the first appearance of Lithuanian dances at the Chicago World's Fair. Her teaching skills were shared with her students at Maria Girls High School in Chicago from 1952-1971 and later at Villa Joseph Maria Girls High School in Holland, Pennsylvania. In 1995 she celebrated her 75 years of profession as a daughter of God's Gentle Servant – Mother Maria Kaupas. Three years later, on Oct. 31, 1998, she peacefully went to eternity and is buried with the Sisters in

St. Casimir's Cemetery in Chicago.

I first met Sister M. Bernarda in the early 1970's. She was one of the first Sisters of St. Casimir that I met. Her personality radiated her love of music, her appreciation of her Lithuanian heritage, and her total commitment to being a nun. Her sweet and gentle nature was complimented by an intensity for perfection. Her tremendous achievements in the musical world never dimmed her humble spirit. Remarkably, Sr. Bernarda never spoke boastfully of her accomplishments, but simply enjoyed sharing her musical talents with all. Her knowledge of the Lithuanian language made her an expert in her native tongue. She willingly helped me stay in touch with my relatives in Lithuania by translating letters and cards. Offering her time and talent was part of her vocation.

The heart of Sister Bernarda beat with a noticeable love for the Sisters of Saint Casimir. She was the door that opened for me an appreciation of Mother Maria and the many Sisters of her Congregation that she introduced me to. On Nov. 4, 1998 I had the privilege of celebrating her Funeral Mass at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Casimir. The following day I stood at her grave and watched her coffin lowered into the earth. A remarkable life had ended and tremendous talent was lost. But I trust a happy reunion with Mother Maria was being celebrated as Sister M. Bernarda saw once again the founder of her religious family who had inspired her since she was a fourteen year old girl.

Rev. Peter Burkauskas is the pastor of St. Andrew and St. Casimir Lithuanian parishes in Philadelphia, PA



Sister M. Bernarda and her girls entertaining Holy Family Villa residents

CHICAGO AREA FOLK DANCE ENSEMBLE,
GRANDIS,
 Celebrates Its
 50th Anniversary



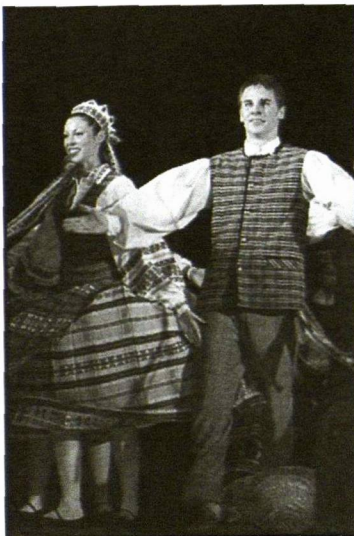
On May 2, 2009, the Chicago, IL area Lithuanian folk dance ensemble, Grandis, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a special concert, "Eina saulelė apie dangų" (The sun crosses the sky) at Mother McAuley High School in Chicago. The concert will feature traditional and newer Lithuanian folk dances in a program celebrating the central theme of the traditional Lithuanian St. John's Eve. The concert will commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the mention of Lithuania in the Quedlinburg Chronicles. 115 dancers will perform in the May 2nd anniversary celebration—preschoolers, children, youth, student, and veteran dancers. Special guests in the concert program will be traditional Lithuanian folk singer, Veronika Povilionienė, from Lithuania, and the Lithuanian folk music group, Biru Bar, from Indianapolis, IN.

In its 50 year history, the ensemble has had only three directors - Irena Šilingas, Irena Smieliauskas, and Violeta Smieliauskas-Fabianovich. The group was founded in 1953 and performed for five years under the direction of Irena Šilingas, but disbanded in 1959 due to her ill health. Grandis was revived in 1964 by Irena Smieliauskas, who served as the ensemble director until 1995 when Violeta Smieliauskas Fabianovich, an experienced dance teacher in her own right, took over the reigns in 1995. As described in Bridges in April 2006, many Chicago area young people have danced in Grandis since its founding. The group's list of "alumni" now numbers 1300 and

continues to grow, as some dancers leave and others join (or rejoin) the ensemble. Artistic director, Violeta Fabianovich, ballet master Gintaras Grinkevičius (a graduate of the School of Choreography, Department of Art, Klaipėda University in Lithuania who joined Grandis in 1994), and ten dedicated, enthusiastic teachers, are currently hard at work preparing the various groups' dancers for the ensemble's anniversary concert.

Through the years, "Grandis" has traveled to and performed in varied venues, including Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals in North America and Lithuanian Song Festival Dance Days in Lithuania. The group performed at Expo 67 in Montreal, Canada (1967) and in the Latvian Folk Dance Festival in Cleveland, Ohio (1997). The group was invited to perform at the Los Angeles Lithuanian Days more than once (1995, 2001, 2005). In the 1970s, "Grandis" staged a full-scale musical "A Lithuanian Wedding", with soloists and actors complementing the dance sequences -- in Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Toronto, Canada. The ensemble also performed throughout North America, South America and Australia. After the May 2nd anniversary concert, Grandis folk dancers will still be busy. The student group will continue rehearsals, preparing to travel to Lithuania in July and participate in the millennial celebrations, the Song Festival Dance Day program. In December the group plans to travel to Argentina to dance in a dance festival celebrating the anniversary of the folk dancing group, Nemunas, its 100th!

Grandis dancers may not all be alike—some were born in Lithuania, some were born in the United States, Canada, and a few in other countries, too. Some dancers may speak Lithuanian better than others, but the love of folk dancing puts everyone on equal footing (pardon the pun). Many former Grandis dancers now enroll their children (or even grandchildren) in Grandis. One group of Grandis dancers, parents of young families, regroup every four years so they can participate in the Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals. Since the last festival took place in 2008 in Los Angeles, they and their teacher are currently are "on hiatus", but will come as spectators to the anniversary concert, and plan to reassemble for practices before the next dance festival.



What reasons do Grandis folk dancers give for their enthusiasm and loyalty? Why do they keep dancing? Is it the pride in their Lithuanian roots? Is it the love of dancing itself? One high school senior listed a compelling reason in the 2008 Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival program



book—he felt that the reason he was offered a scholarship to college was because he had listed Lithuanian folk dancing among his extra-curricular activities! For young children, parental influence may be a factor. After all, parents sign them up and drive them to rehearsals. High school and student dancers may keep dancing because their friends do, too. Read further for the reasons given by a few dancers from the Grandis veterans' group.

In the words of a few dancers...

being part of the Grandis family

The veterans' group originally was taught by Irena Smieliauskas, but for the past 10 years, Vida Brazaitis, a longtime Grandis dancer, has been its teacher... In response to a question posed of longtime folk dancer Mary Ellen Martis, as to what about Grandis keeps her coming, she wrote- "I just love to dance. With my friends it's weekly social hour. (The dancers often linger after rehearsals or go out for a meal, rk.) This is how I keep in touch with my friends doing something we like together. It's good exercise too." Regina Vasiliauskas and her husband, Romas, relatively recent immigrants from Lithuania, joined Grandis in the fall of 2008. They have said that Lithuanian folk dancing was not something they used to do much in Lithuania (perhaps since they learned to dance in school?) Regina wrote that they don't feel they are "sacrificing" (or wasting) their free time in Grandis rehearsals, but rather, they are (willingly) spending their free time in rehearsals, and it is fun.

Ona Smilgys shared her thoughts on belonging to Grandis...

I started dancing (Lithuanian folk dances) when I was in high school and enjoyed it very much. Then I had a family and lost interest in maintaining ties with the Lithuanian community. After a number of years went by, I started attending mass at PLC (Blessed George Matulaitis Mission, located in the Lithuanian World Center complex, rk) in

Lemont (Illinois) and became interested again. I joined Grandis Veteranai (the veterans' group, where dancers are usually ages 45+, rk) in 1993 and have been dancing with them ever since. I've seen people come and go, some passed away, but we keep on dancing.

I'm the oldest one of the group now, but when we're together I don't feel so old. I love socializing with the rest of the people in the group and learning the traditional dances because they're so different from anything else. Vida is a wonderful teacher and so patient with us. I like performing because I'm proud to show that I can still "kick up my heels". When I hear the music it just makes me want to dance or sing and when I perform and know that I didn't make any mistakes, it's great. I'd love to participate in performances even more, but the younger generation is more in demand than the veteranai, which is understandable.

Coming to practice is not a chore for me because it gives me a purpose and something to look forward to. I don't get as much exercise as I should and the weekly practices are a great way to get the blood flowing.

I guess you could say that I'm a born again Lithuanian. I subscribe to (Lithuanian language newspapers) "Draugas" and "Amerikos Lietuvis" (probably a few English language Lithuanian publications, too, rkk) and try to attend various functions and get together. I'm proud of my heritage and sometimes wish that I hadn't wasted so many years in between.

Grandis has been an inspiration to me because I see the little children starting to dance when they are very young and all of the age groups in-between. I watch them grow up in Grandis and sometimes find their soulmates and get married and then come back to dance with their children. All-in-all, I guess you could say that I'm very happy to be a part of the Grandis family.

Continued on page 17

Condolence to Jeanne,

A few weeks ago, Tim Dorr, the husband of our Bridge's editor, Jeanne Dorr, passed away. It was sadly sudden and unexpected.

His lineage was Scottish, but over time, Tim had become an active member of the Philadelphia Lithuanian-American community. He most recently served as chairman of the board for the Lithuanian Music Hall in Philadelphia.

I met Tim some 18 years ago, when Jeanne and I were meeting to travel by car to Washington from our homes in south New Jersey, on one of our first lobbying missions for recognition of Lithuania's independence. At first introduction, I could sense that Tim had as good an understanding of what was at stake, as most of us of who claimed Lithuanian heritage.

After independence, the Dorr house became a stop over for many of the new Lithuanian immigrants to America from Lithuania. Some were relatives, some were friends, but there were also quite a few who were just Lithuanians in need of guidance and a place to call home for a while.

In everything that Jeanne undertook, including key work at the Lithuanian Communication Center, Lithuanian Orphan Care, and of course Bridges, Tim was a most vocal promoter and thoughtful supporter. He had a sharp political mind and enjoyed a good discussion and argument. He was sincere and honest, and had little tolerance for those who feigned it.

With Tim's passing, Jeanne's lost her soul mate of 40 years and many of us a loyal friend. On behalf of the BRIDGES Team and, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., I extend our heartfelt condolences to Jeanne, sons Richard and Christopher and their families.

*Vytas Maciunas, President
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.*



JBANC 2009

CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON BALTIC REGIONAL SECURITY AND "OLD THREATS AND NEW CHALLENGES"

Washington, DC (JBANC) ---
The eighth biennial Joint Baltic

American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) conference being held in Washington, DC on May 15-16, 2009 will focus on Baltic Regional Security and "Old Threats and New Challenges."

The President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers will be giving the opening keynote address at the conference on Saturday, May 16. The main conference venue is at the Renaissance M St. Hotel in Washington, DC located at 1143 New Hampshire Avenue.

Saturday's program on May 16 features four panels, each dealing with a specific look at the Baltic region. Discussions will range from a regional threat assessment, regional partnerships and potential solutions in addressing these challenges, policies of the new U.S. Administration

and Congress towards the Baltics, along with diaspora relations and citizen diplomacy.

The Friday, May 15 program includes two events. These are a congressional briefing and reception to be held on Capitol Hill from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. The panel will be moderated by Stephen Blank, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College. U.S. Congressional staff will also participate. From 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. a presentation and panel discussion will be held at the Heritage Foundation, co-hosted by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Presenters include representatives from the VOCMF's Global Museum on Communism (GMOC) and the Swedish-based Institute for Information on the Crimes of Communism (IICC/UOK). A reception will follow.

The basic registration fee for the conference is \$165. Registration forms can be found and downloaded at: <http://jbanc.org/?m=1&p=2>.

Additional information about the conference is available on JBANC's website: <http://jbanc.org> and JBANC will also be frequently updating conference information on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/JBANCchatter>. For any questions related to the conference, please contact JBANC at: jbanc@jbanc.org or (tel.) 301-908-2579.

JBANC represents the Estonian American National Council, Inc., the American Latvian Association, Inc., and the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.

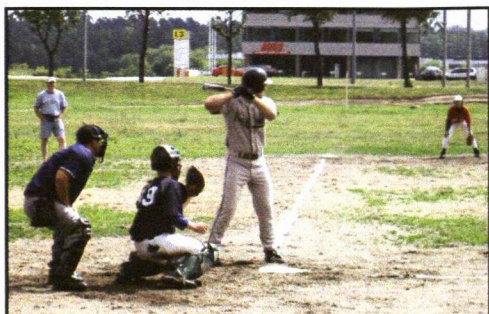
Will Gordon

BEISBOLAS LIETUVOJE:

A little-known Sport that is Beginning to Make Waves both in Lithuania and Abroad!!



Kaunas the 2005 European Champions – Group B.



*Problem with the infield ??
No problem -Play Ball !!!*



Will Gordon teaching fundamentals to future baseball greats



Going, going, gone !!!

There were two outs in the bottom of the 9th inning. Our team was leading by one. The count on the batter was full and the potential winning runner was standing on third base. I throw a curveball, a slow bender on the outside part of the plate; the batter connects, hitting a high soaring fly ball to right field. The outfielder turns and runs, gets under the ball, and makes the catch. The game is over! The fans are cheering, teammates are patting each other on the back, shouting, giving high fives. We did it! Lituanica Kaunas had defeated Vilnius Logipolija, taking a 1-0 lead in the Championship Series of the Lithuanian Baseball Finals!

That's right: Baseball in Lithuania.

When the first pitch of the Lithuanian Championship is thrown to begin the 2009 season, it will mark the 21st season since the creation of the Lithuanian Baseball Association and the beginnings of baseball. Though the beginnings of baseball in this country date back almost 90 years to when Steponas Darius, the founder of basketball in Lithuania, brought both the games of basketball and baseball to Lithuania, baseball did not take hold as an organized sport until around the time of independence from Soviet Rule just two decades ago. Now, baseball is a growing and thriving sport that is fighting its way to recognition and adoration, and not just among the brave few (Lithuanians) who play it.

From North Carolina to Lithuania

My name is Will Gordon and since 2005 I have played baseball for the Lituanica Beisbolo Klubas. In addition to playing for the Kaunas baseball squad, I recently accepted a position working for the Lithuanian Baseball Association as Director of Foreign Affairs and Game Development.

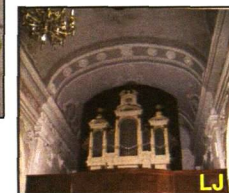
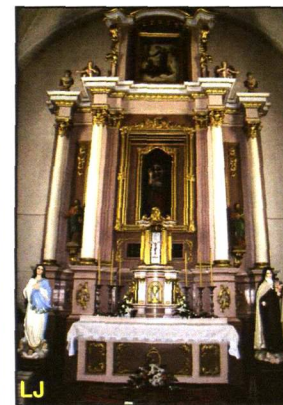
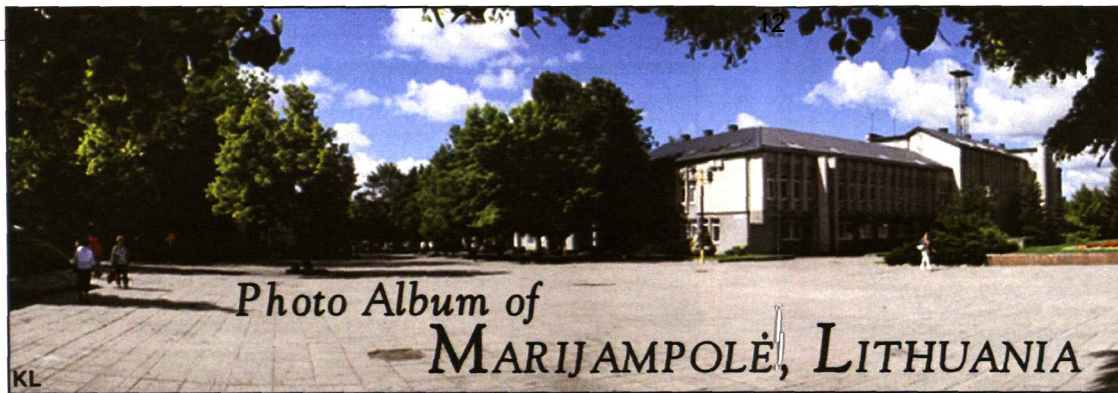
I first came to Lithuania in the summer 2005 shortly after finishing my undergraduate studies at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, where I played baseball for four years and graduated with a degree in Sociology. The opportunity to play baseball in Lithuania came on graduation day when my coach was contacted by a Lithuanian coach interested in signing a foreign player to their roster. My coach put me in contact with the Kaunas team via email, and a few days later I made my decision to come to Lithuania.

In making the decision to come to Lithuania to play baseball, I was deciding blindly. I knew very little more about Lithuania other than its location on the map and that numerous famous basketball players had come to the US from Lithuania. I arrived at Vilnius airport with only the names of my coaches, my baseball equipment, and the knowledge that somebody wearing a baseball jacket would be at the airport to pick me up.

What is baseball like in Lithuania? Will I be able to communicate with my coach and teammates? These and many more questions were swirling in my brain as I entered the terminal at Vilnius Airport, and scanned the crowd in search of a baseball jacketed man.

My first experiences in Lithuania with my new team were incredible. I spent a few days in Vilnius, adjusting to the seven-hour time difference, sightseeing, preparing for competition, and visiting some youth baseball games. We then traveled to Bulgaria (by bus - a 50-hour bus ride) where we took first place in the week-long B Pool European Cupwinners' Cup, qualifying us for

Continued on page 17



Photos by:
JA - Joanne Antanavage,
Phila., PA
KL - Kestutis Lukas,
Phila., PA
LJ - Msgr. Leonas Jakimavicius
Alytus, Lithuania

Wonders of Lithuania and Lithuanians

In 2001 the world was invited to select Seven Wonders of the World. On July 7, 2007 during a big ceremony in Lisbon, Portugal, the results of nominations and voting, lasting six years were announced. The winners were: Great Wall of China, Petra, Christ the Redeemer, Machu Picchu, Chichen Itza, Roman Colosseum, Taj Mahal, and honorary candidate – Great Pyramid. Although the nomination was world-wide, Lithuania did not submit anything as if it had nothing that could surprise and impress the world.

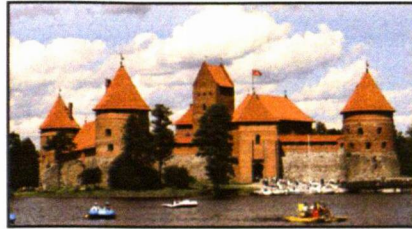
Half a year later, on October 5, 2007, dr. Romualdas Kriaučiūnas, in an editorial in "Draugas" Lithuanian daily newspaper, invited readers to nominate Seven Wonders of Lithuania. In a short time sixty one entries were received and published on November 17. The top seven were:



Hill of the Crosses (Kryžių kalnas) situated about ten miles from Šiauliai. It is about 180 feet long and about 150 feet wide. This place is a place of healing. The first crosses were erected after the 1831 uprising of Lithuanians against Russia's tsarist government, to honor those who died fighting for freedom. In time more crosses were erected after the 1863 rebellion. During the Soviet occupation this place was a form of passive resistance against atheistic Communism. The Communists repeatedly bulldozed the area, burning the wooden crosses and melting down metal ones for scrap. But the crosses were always there. At one time, in order not to attract the attention of the Soviets, people cut the crosses out of sod on the hill. Another time they arranged pebbles and stones in

the form of crosses.

After the political change in 1988 the status changed completely. It gained world fame after Pope John Paul II visited and offered Mass here on September 7, 1993. Pilgrims come from all over the world to pray and leave a cross. Today the crosses number over 100,000. There is no one buried here.



Trakai Island Castle (Trakų pilis). This medieval island castle is located on the shores of Lake Galvė, situated about 17 miles west of Vilnius. The construction was begun in the 14th century by Grand Duke Kęstutis and completed by his son Vytautas the Great. Trakai was one of the main centers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The castle suffered major damage during various attacks. In the 17th century it was severely damaged again and gradually fell into disrepair.

Major reconstruction work on the castle began after World War II and was finished in 1961. Today it is a major tourist attraction, and houses a museum.



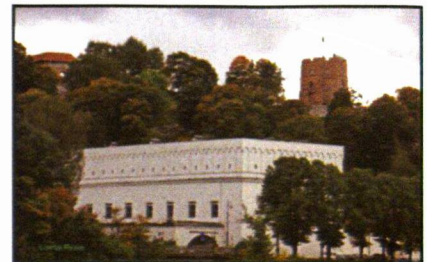
Kernavė is known for its historic hillfort mounds (piliakalnis) and is believed to be the first seat of government of Lithuania. It was the capital of Grand Duke Traidenis in 1279. In 1390 Teutonic knights burned the town and the castle. Today it is a treasure trove for archeologists and is called the "Troy of Lithuania."



Neringos kopos. The Curian spit (Kuršių pusiasalis) is a narrow sand peninsula about 60 miles in length that divides the Curian lagoon from the Baltic Sea. It is comprised of natural dune ridges. Before World War II an attempt was made to control the sifting sand by planting grass and flowers on the dunes. Today the result is fantastic: white sandy beaches, dunes, flowers, blue sea and blue sky.



Old Town of Vilnius (Vilniaus senamiestis), one of the largest surviving medieval old towns in Northern Europe, has an area of 887 acres. The oldest part of the Lithuania's capital today is a place where some of Europe's greatest architectural styles – gothic, renaissance, baroque and neoclassical can be seen. One of the most elaborate architectural complexes is the Vilnius University which occupies an entire section of the Old Town and has 13 courtyards with St. Johns' gothic church. Other landmarks include the Presidential Palace, Radziwill Palace, Vilnius Castle Complex, St. Anne's Church, Vilnius Cathedral in Cathedral Square, Gate of Dawn, Monument of Three Crosses, National Museum of Lithuania, Lithuanian National Drama Theatre and many others.



Gediminas Tower (Gedimino pilis) situated on the Gediminas Hill is all that remains of the Upper Castle. The first fortification here was built of wood in the 9th century. Later in the 10th century a wooden castle was built. When Gediminas designated Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania, this castle was improved and expanded. The Teutonic Knights repeatedly attacked the castle to no avail. After these Knights were defeated at the battle of Grunvald (Lithuanian: Žalgiris mušis) in 1410, the castle was rebuilt and fortified by Vytautas the Great. In 1655 the Russian army invaded Vilnius. More than ten thousand Vilnius residents were killed, fire raged for 17 days and the castle finally fell for the first time in its history. Although later an attempt was made to restore it, it was never quite the same and was abandoned.

The present Tower is the site from which occupying forces flew their flag. In October of 1988 the Lithuanian tri-color, forbidden by the Soviet regime for forty five years, replaced the Soviet flag, and has been flying proudly ever since.



Gate of Dawn (Aušros vartai) is one of nine city gates built into the fortification of the city of Vilnius. In the 16th century city gates often had religious artifacts intended to guard the city and bless the travelers. This specific picture is painted on wood, artist unknown, and is deemed miraculous. A chapel was built over the gate to enshrine the picture. Thousands of pilgrims come from

neighboring countries to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of Mercy and leave a votive candle in thanksgiving for a cure, a blessing received, a prayer answered. During the Soviet occupation, cars were encouraged to drive through this gate, but the Chapel was not closed down. After the reinstatement of independence, the passage of cars was blocked. On September 4, 1993 Pope John Paul II recited the Rosary at this Chapel.

Half a year after these wonders were published, on June 25, the readers of "Draugas" were invited to vote for Seven Wonders of Lithuanian achievement in the United States. When the results were in, three tied for first place, two for second place and three for third place. So, we have Eight Wonders of Lithuanians Abroad. And they are:

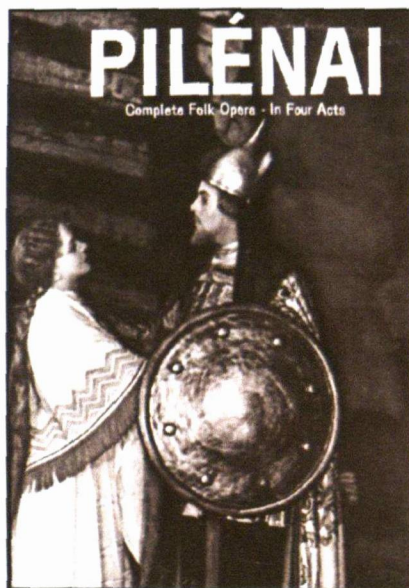
"Draugas". The only Lithuanian daily newspaper published abroad. It is the also the oldest continuously published Lithuanian language newspaper anywhere in the world. It was founded as a weekly Roman Catholic paper and published its first edition on July 25, 1909, in Wilkes-Barre, PA. In 1916 it relocated to Chicago IL, and has been published daily, except Sundays and, more recently, Mondays. During the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the newspaper served as a voice of independent Lithuania. On a daily basis it published the "Chronicles of the Catholic Church" information of the persecution of Catholics under the Soviet regime, smuggled out of Lithuania.

Today it contains twelve pages of political, religious, scientific, economic, and public interest articles, announcements, and paid advertising. The Saturday supplement features Art, Literature and Science sections. This year "Draugas" is celebrating its 100 year jubilee!

Lithuanian Foundation (Lietuvių Fondas). Although the idea of having a foundation to support Lithuanian culture existed, an article by dr. Antanas Razma "A Million Dollar Fund for Lithuanian Needs", published in "Draugas" in 1960, brought the idea to fruition. The fund was officially established in 1962 and is a community-based financial/cultural institution. The income from the capital

supports various Lithuanian educational, cultural, scientific and youth activities. By the end of 2008, more than fourteen million dollars has been distributed for various Lithuanian activities. To date, the principal is over fifteen million dollars.

Lithuanian Encyclopedia (Lietuvių enciklopedija). During Lithuanian Independence between the two World Wars, several attempts were made to publish an encyclopedia in the Lithuanian language. One was abandoned due to lack of funds; another was interrupted due to the breakout of World War II. But the idea was revived in the United States and Juozas Kapočius organized the editorial team. Between 1953 and 1966, they published the 35-volume Lietuvių enciklopedija in the Lithuanian language. Two volumes of supplements were published later, one in 1969 and another in 1965. To fully comprehend what a monumental achievement this was, bear in mind that most of their material and sources were left behind in Lithuania and were not available due to the Iron Curtain. However, it remains the largest Lithuanian encyclopedia ever printed.



Lithuanian Opera Company of Chicago (Lietuvių opera) was founded by Lithuanian emigrants in 1956 and presents operas in Lithuanian. It celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 2006 by presenting

the Lithuanian opera "Pilėnai" where stage sets were brought over from Lithuanian Opera House in Vilnius.

Institute of Lithuanian Studies (Lituaništikos institutas). It was founded in the United States in 1951. Its primary purpose was to research and preserve Lithuanian culture. The Institute consists of the following divisions: Lithuanian Language, Literature, Ethnography, Lithuanian Pre-history, History, Geography, and Lithuanian American History. It is registered in the State of Illinois as a non-profit corporation.

Monuments. This category pertains to impressive architectural structures and monuments. Among those mentioned were numerous Lithuanian Catholic churches and the Šiluva Chapel in the Basilica of the national Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington DC. Also noted were the Lithuanian World Center (Lemont IL), The Youth Center (Chicago IL), The Lithuanian Plaza complex (Chicago IL) consisting of the St. Casimir's Convent, Maria High School, the Nativity of B.V. Mary Church, the Holy Cross Hospital, and a monument to Darius and Girėnas. The two Lithuanian Cemeteries in Chicago (St. Casimir's and Lithuanian National) complete the list.

Lithuanian Youth Camp Dainava (Dainavos stovykla) opened its doors in summer of 1957 and three years ago celebrated its 50th anniversary. Camp Dainava consists of boys' and girls' dorms with seventy beds each, a large

dinning hall with a modern kitchen, a winterized building for seventy campers, with a hall/chapel and administrative offices. It covers 226 acres that include ten acre spring-fed lake Spiglys with a beach and a beach pavilion as well as kitchen facilities that are used for special occasions such as the annual picnic.

During the summer the camp is in constant use by different Lithuanian groups. During off season smaller groups converge on the winterized building for special seminars, retreats, conferences and workshops. The tranquil and beautiful setting is conducive to contemplation, friendship, creative dialogue and spiritual as well as physical renewal.

Lithuanian Saturday Schools (Lietuviškos mokyklos). With the influx of thousands of Lithuanians to the United States after the Second World War, the first concern for parents was the upkeep of Lithuanian culture and language. Thus by the early fifties of the last century every large center of Lithuanian immigrants, such as Boston and Worcester MA, New York NY, Philadelphia, PA, Cleveland OH, Detroit and Grand Rapids MI, Chicago IL, Los Angeles LA, had a Saturday school. Since many immigrants were teachers, the only problem was to find facilities and books, which were soon overcome. Thus on Saturdays, Lithuanian children went to school to study Lithuanian grammar, language, history, literature, geography and music. Today, third generation of

Lithuanian children attend these same schools to keep in touch with their heritage.

Although the above listed received the most votes, many other notable achievements were submitted. Thus honorary mention should be given to the Lithuanian Youth camps Neringa and Rakas, Balzekas Museum in Chicago, IL, Lithuanian Folk Dance and Song festivals, and various charity organizations helping Lithuanians here and in Lithuania.

Looking over this list, it is truly amazing and wonderful what Lithuanians have accomplished in this country over the past sixty years.

Gražina Kriaučiūnas

Gražina Kriaučiūnas is active in the Lithuanian-American Community and "Ateitis" organization. She regularly contributes articles and travelogues to various Lithuanian magazines and newspapers. She is currently the editor of www.ateitis.org website.

**Photos by:*

Hill of the Crosses (Kryžių kalnas)

by Teresė Vekteris

Trakai Island Castle (Trakų pilis)

by Kęstutis Lukas

Kernavą *by Jonas Dunčias*

Neringa *by Laima Reiss*

Old town *by Vilma Balnytė*

Gediminas Tower (Gedimino pilis)

by Kęstutis Lukas

Gate of Dawn (Aušros vartai)

by Teresė Vekteris

"Pilėnai" *from the album cover of the opera recording*

ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION

Trivia Quiz on page 6

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Author Bernard Malamud, who was a baseball fan, took the basic elements of the Waitkus story and wove them along with various baseball legends (notably Joe Jackson) into a novel, a morality tale called "THE NATURAL". The book was released in 1952 and was eventually made into a film that was released in 1984. The DVD extras for the film contain a biography of Waitkus, which points out that writers in his rookie year often called Waitkus "A NATURAL", a fact which Malamud presumably picked up on.

Eddie Waitkus, the son of Lithuanian immigrants, grew up in Boston. He saw some of the bloodiest fighting of

World War II with the US army in the Philippines, earning four bronze stars. Upon his return to baseball he quickly became a star for the Chicago Cubs.

Eddie began his pro career in 1938 playing for the Worumbo Indians, a semi-pro team sponsored by Worumbo Mill in Lisbon, Maine.

He was elected to the National League All-Star team twice (1948 and 1949)."



Edward Shakalis

Edward Shakalis is a retired Electrical Engineer and a ham radio operator. He and his son Rick run "The Lithuanian Open" golf tournament.

Continued from page 11

BEISBOLAS LIETUVOJE

the A Pool tournament for the first time in team history. This was quite an accomplishment for a team from Lithuania, where baseball is not popular and basketball is king.

We returned to Kaunas, greeted at the Kaunas Castle by a welcoming party of news reporters, oak wreaths, family and friends. We went to a nearby restaurant to celebrate the victory with champagne, beer, kepta duona (fried bread), and toasts given by players, coaches, and team representatives. I spent the evening walking the streets of Kaunas and seeing the Old Town, Kaunas Castle, Town Hall, Laisvės Aleja (Freedom Avenue), and Soboras (the huge Orthodox Cathedral). The next morning I drove to Vilnius, attended a baseball press conference, and in a flash I had boarded my flight back to the United States.

Even as I write about these first experiences, it brings a smile to my face.

I had met a team of players whom I respected and admired for their dedication to their sport and for the hospitality which they had shown me. I enjoyed the people I met and the food I ate; I had been able to play and experience a sport I love in a new place; and I had won a championship.

Lithuanian Baseball Association

The Lithuanian Baseball Association supports and maintains all divisions of baseball in Lithuania: a First and Second Division for adults, and five youth divisions. In total there are 23 Clubs competing for Lithuanian Championships in their respective age divisions, from 8 years old to adults. The winners of Lithuanian Championships in each division go on to compete in European Club Championships. Teams in the Lithuanian First Division also compete for an Interleague Championship, which includes top-level Clubs from Latvia and Belarus.

This summer Lithuanian Club Champions will be competing in tournaments in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Belarus.

In addition to this Club system, the LBA supports youth and adult National Teams competing for European Championships. In 2009 Lithuanian National Youth Teams will be traveling to Bulgaria, Belgium, and Germany to compete in European Championships. Lithuania will also be serving as the hosting nation for the 2009 Big League Championships that will be in Utena, Lithuania this coming July.

MLB Recognition for young Lithuanian baseball players

Lithuanian Baseball is producing top-caliber athletes who are now being looked at by professional scouts and coaches from the United States. Two young players, Edvardas Matesavičius and Dovydas Neverauskas, have been chosen for the second year in a row to attend MLB Prospect Camps to be held in Europe this spring. In May Lithuanian Baseball

will host Professional Scout Tom Randolph of the Pittsburgh Pirates who will be visiting Lithuania to get a glimpse of several young prospects. Lithuanian Baseball has also recently garnered support from the US Embassy in Vilnius for their baseball endeavors.

Also, two Lithuanian pitchers have signed contracts to play with 1st Division Clubs in Stockholm, Sweden for the 2009 season.

Lithuanian Baseball: Coming to a City Near You this Summer!

This summer we have two teams traveling to the United States to play baseball.

Lituanica Beisbolo Klubas of Kaunas will be traveling to Chicago and then to Davenport, Iowa from June 10-25th to play against teams made up of current and ex-college players. They will play 8 games in 14 days, in addition to attending an MLB game in Chicago. This is an opportunity for them to raise their level of play and gain exposure to an elite level of amateur baseball in the United States. Several Lithuanian college and pro prospects will be traveling with the team. The team will be hosted by the Quad-City 76ers, a semiprofessional team in the **Davenport area**.

The Lithuanian 14 and Under National Team has been invited to the Continental Cup in Cleveland, Ohio, from June 26th through July 6th. The top 14 year olds have been selected from all baseball clubs in Lithuania for this traveling team. The Continental Cup will include teams from around the U.S. as well as international teams. This is a particularly talented team, and this tournament is a special opportunity for them to prepare for the upcoming European Championships in Germany which will be at the end of July.

In addition to the goal of competing against strong competition and getting exposed to baseball in the U.S., this is a great opportunity for those of you who will be nearby to see Lithuanian Baseball!

We are looking for sponsorship for these two teams traveling to compete in the U.S., and would welcome any moral and/or financial support that you, the Bridges readers, may give us. In these particularly difficult financial times, it is often the cultural and community organizations which suffer from lack of public and private funding. I encourage you to give to organizations such as Lithuanian Baseball that are working to promote the sports and activities you love in your native country 'across the pond' – Lietuva.

For further information regarding Lithuanian baseball or about giving financial support to these young athletes, please contact Lithuanian American Community, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134 or LithuanianUSA@yahoo.com

Also, please visit our website at www.beisbolas.lt to see a bit more of what our organization is doing to promote youth baseball in Lithuania.

**Photos are by Will Gordon*

Becoming Lithuanian

I went to ballet lessons on Saturday mornings. My cousins went to “Lituanistinė mokykla.” They always sang “Happy Birthday” as “Ilgiausių metų,” and I never understood them. My mother was a typical American blend of Irish and German immigrants, making me a child of the melting pot. I grew up dreading Christmas Eve and found the portrait of my namesake that hung in my grandmother’s hallway utterly depressing. I wasn’t Lithuanian. My father was.

After my mother died and before močiutė became too sick to travel, my father brought us to Lithuania. Rather, my father dragged us to Lithuania. We protested. It would be a country full of pickled herring, wrinkled relatives, an alien language, funny toilets, and a tantalizing sea too cold to swim in. We were teenagers. We just wanted to go to Paris. As it turns out, Paris doesn’t hold a candle to Vilnius. Paris doesn’t have Dėdė Vytautas and cousin Andrius. Paris doesn’t have Trakai, Kryžių Kalnas, or the family farm in Kačerginė. Paris doesn’t have šaltibarščiai. I cried the entire flight to Paris.

On Christmas Eve, seven years later, over my plate of untouched pickled herring, my aunt’s brother half-jokingly asked, “Hey you’re a teacher, wanna come to Lithuania with me this summer?” Six months later we were on one plane across the Atlantic and another across the Baltic. I agreed to be a presenter at the APPLE program at Camp Viltis because I believe in the power of education. I have been working with students with special needs for ten years and even in our “land of opportunity” in the US, I don’t see them treated equally to their peers. When I learned that students with dis-



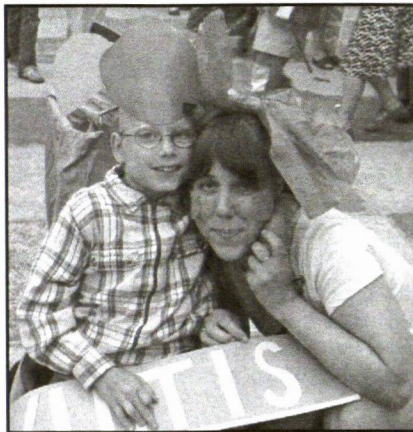
A birthday celebration

abilities don’t often even go to school in Lithuania, I felt a strong tug to get out and investigate and contribute to the change that is beginning there.

As part of the APPLE team that volunteered at Camp Viltis, I spent two weeks working with students with disabilities, their families, and a group of Lithuanian teachers. This was simultaneously one of the most rewarding and frustrating experiences of my life. I immediately fell in love with a handful of the children I was working with. They wanted to play games, ask questions, and sing songs. I couldn’t understand a word they said. I had a translator with me for my lectures, but these were kids. They don’t have time to wait for someone to give your words meaning. They want you to pretend to be a meška and chase them around the lawn. Initially, I felt like a failure. I felt like I had a disability. Feeling disabled, while frustrating, actually proved to be a valuable learning experience. I could put myself in my students’ shoes for a moment—so much to say and no words to communicate with. Eventually, we found ways to communicate that were language neutral. Smiles, laughter, dancing, and hugs are all sincere ways to express affection and build friendships. Some of the kids knew a few

words of English, and I picked up enough Lithuanian to scream “Aš meška” as I chased Karolis in and out of the bushes surrounding the dining hall.

While I was content being a bear and singing nursery rhymes, my purpose for being at Viltis was not solely to befriend the children at camp, my job was to teach the teachers. A small team of us from the US and Canada was charged with putting together a program that would bring new ideas and understanding to a group of education professionals from Lithuania who had some contact with students with special needs. I thought this would be easy. I knew teaching, I was full of creative ideas, and I had a translator for the language barrier, what else was there? I quickly learned that many of the women who had come to camp didn’t actually believe that these special children were capable of learning, and many of them were even more discouraged by the bureaucracies of their schools than I. Many of them distrusted us as Americans, weren’t interested in change, and were steadfast in the ways they knew, the ways they were schooled, the ways of the Soviets. I now had living portraits to go with the physical pictures of Soviet occupation that I’d known previously. I began to



Camp Viltis (Hope)

understand. Why grandpa had to leave his oldest children to be a freedom fighter and could never look back when forced to flee. And why he never talked about Lietuva. What it means that Dédé was buried in uniform with three other soldiers. Why Vytautas' portraits are so sharp and shadowy. My purpose for being there became all the more clear and important and I felt it in my blood.

Education is a huge part of rebuilding a nation. It is an honor that the Ministry of Education in Lithuania invites American teachers there year after year to share our educational philosophies and techniques. All I wanted to do was sit with these women and hear their stories, share experiences and ideas, listen to their beliefs, and maybe argue mine a little, but again, I was blocked by language. The translators tried, but it wasn't sufficient. I understood enough to know that there were big conversations happening there in those weeks. I could translate the emotions and enough words to get the gist, but could only be a silent observer. Sure, I got enough lecture time in and did some activities with the teachers that I'm proud of. They have some new tools from me for their classrooms and a few new windows from which to look at their students. But I wanted to be a

part of the bigger picture. I still do.

There is a supposed tradition at Camp Viltis that if you throw something into the Baltic, it will return the following year. Evidently, it is true. On the last night of camp, in front of a few hundred witnesses, two of my colleagues tossed me unto the sea. Last month, without any deliberation of the financial realities of a return or thought to missing the few months that make Chicago winters worth it, I turned in my project proposal to APPLE and bought a plane ticket. I have shopped around Chicago-land for language courses for adults to no avail, and so before I begin my work at Camp Viltis this coming summer, I will enroll in a two-week language immersion program at University of Vilnius. While it won't be enough to negate my need for a translator, it is a start. And maybe it'll let me chase Karolis around camp as something more interesting than a bear.

Something happened to me last summer. Maybe it was the baptism in the Baltic or the pickled herring that finally made its way down my throat, but somewhere between Vilnius and Giruliai, Kaunas and Druskininkai, I became a Lithuanian. I have a long way to go, especially in learning the language. But if at seven years old, Isidorious can be the first student with a disability in his entire town to attend a mainstream school with his peers, than I can do my best to learn a new language at twenty eight. I can't say how things would have turned out if I had gone to Lithuanian school instead of ballet



Learning Lithuanian

class, but I can say that my father gave me the greatest gift when he "forced" us to visit Lithuania in 2000. There is something remarkable about being rooted in a culture that truly values its freedom and equally so about the moment I breathed in the Baltic air and finally felt whole.

A.P.P.L.E is the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education. More information can be found at <http://www.applequest.org>

Ann Petroliūnas

Ann Petroliūnas has her Master's degree in teaching special education and currently works with high school students with learning disabilities in the Chicago, Illinois area. At OPRF High School, she teaches science through the learning development program, directs the Orchesis Dance Company, and sponsors the Dance Club. In her often non-existent spare time, she enjoys dancing and taking pictures, and is working on learning the Lithuanian language.



Getting thrown into the Baltic Sea

GRANDIS, Continued from page 17

Photos are past and present—from the "Grandis" archives.



In some ways, perhaps the feelings of Mary Ellen, Regina, and Ona are not that unusual. Members of Grandis and other folk dancing groups probably join their groups and dance in them for a variety of reasons... The program book of the XIII Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival (2008) featured a wonderful folk dancing group participants' genealogical tree (also available as a t-shirt) which showed the participating groups' connectedness. To quote in part Canada's Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P., in that same program book, "...Participants...will gather to enjoy every aspect of Lithuanian folk dancing which draws on centuries of symbols and folk traditions of rural life..." In this modern age, it is still nice to celebrate century-old traditions, enjoying other aspects, too, and we hope that folk dancing groups like Grandis continue to thrive.

Ilgiausių metų Grandis!

Ramunė Kubilius

Ramunė Kubilius is an academic medical librarian by profession. She has served in the Lithuanian-American Community's Executive Committee in the past, is currently active in several other Lithuanian organizations and she dances with the Lithuanian folk dance ensemble, "Grandis". She writes for the Lithuanian language press in North America and has contributed to "Bridges" over the years.

Editor's Note: Best wishes and congratulations to Grandis on their Golden Jubilee!

News and Views

Kubilius meets with US congressmen

Vilnius, (ELTA) - Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius met with the delegation of the US House of Representatives.

They visited Vilnius and discussed bilateral relations, the international situation, the prospects of the recovery of the world economy and questions related to the Jewish heritage in Lithuania.

Prime Minister Kubilius repeated Lithuania's commitment to be a strategic partner of the U.S.A. in the consolidation of democratic values, peace and security in various parts of the world. Shelley Berkly, head of the delegation from the Congress, underlined that by visiting Lithuania, the members of the US House of Representatives not only thank its Government and people for support to the US and NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also express support to Lithuania's position in the light of the invasion of Russia into Georgia.

Kubilius in turn told the Congressional delegation that the U.S.A. and the EU have to help Russia to avoid such mistakes because this would be highly beneficial for Russia itself first of all.

When speaking about the effect of the recession of the world economy on Lithuania, Prime Minister Kubilius expressed belief that Lithuania would overcome economic challenges and hard times and it will become a good occasion for politicians to reach an agreement and perform necessary reforms that were postponed for a long time. Congressmen in turn praised the determined actions of the Lithuanian Government in reduction of the budget deficit in the light of the financial and economic crisis.

895m litas prepared for business recovery

Vilnius (ELTA) - The business sector is to receive 895 million litas (262.08 million euros) intended for business recovery. Soon the banks operating in Lithuania will start allocating this amount of money in the form of credits. Moreover, the banks are expected to add their part of 20-30 percent to these funds themselves. Economy Minister Dainius Kreivys announced this news after a sitting of the working group on the supervision and control of the implementation of economic stimulus plan held in the palace of the Government.

According to the minister, the banks have already been invited to bid for the sum and the time for doing it is "about to end". "We have projects on the programme of heating insulation of public buildings moving via our ministry which alone amounts to 600 million litas (175.7 million euros). We think that this moving will become only faster: we have already signed 47 projects totaling 150 million litas (43.92 million euros) and crediting has already started," Kreivys said.

In addition, the "Business Spring" was announced on April 28. On this day, the Government plans to approve a great number of documents eliminating various obstacles to the business sector.

Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius is also in an optimistic mood. He states that the economic stimulus plan will help to revive the country and that there might be no need to cut the state budget by yet another 1.5-2 billion litas (439.24 million euros - 585,650 euros) in June. In April, it is planned to reduce the assignments from the budget by about 3 billion litas (878.48 million euros).

Information Center for Homecoming Lithuanians

The Swallows And The Hawk

KREGŽDUTĖS IR VANAGAS

*“Senovė je gyveno labai žiaurus karalius,”
A Lithuanian Tale, told by Pranas Sasnauskas in
“Lietuvių Sakmės”*

English translation by Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien

Long ago, there lived a very cruel king, who wanted to be the most powerful, and the most wealthy of all, and he preyed upon foreigners as well as his own people. The people barely had time to bring in their crops, before the king's soldiers arrived and confiscated everything, to the last grain or kernel. This looted harvest was offered to foreign merchants and exchanged for gold and silver. The king's wealth increased, while the people began to die of hunger. Some people started to hide grain in the church, but the cruel king soon found out about that, and began to rob even the church.

Thus this king mistreated his people for many years; many died of hunger and sickness.

Eventually, one year, a drought descended on the land, and the people were barely able to realize one small measure of grain upon threshing.

But the king ordered his soldiers to collect all the grain that had been threshed, thus leaving not even the smallest bit for the people.

The people began to call on God for help.

Women, leading their children, approached the castle gates and with tears, begged the king to have mercy, not to take their bread, not to condemn their children to starvation. The king felt pestered by the women's cries and lamentations, but his heart was not softened.

Then, the kings of other lands, discovering that their cruel neighbor was subjecting his own people to hunger, taking away from them their last speck of grain, forbade their merchants from buying the grain or exchanging it for gold.

The king, angry now as a wolf, decided to rid himself of the hungry women and children. He decreed that during the winter he would undertake to feed all the starving people in his castle. All were invited and women with their children began to arrive from every direction. The guards opened wide the gates, and the palace courtyard filled with people. The courtyard contained several tower halls built of timber, where tables had been set up, laden

with bread and meat. People's tired eyes brightened at the sight of all the food, and all quickly sat at the tables, happy that they would, at least this once, be able to eat their fill.

While everyone ate, suspecting nothing amiss, the soldiers closed and locked the towers' doors. And then they set fire to all sides of the towers.

Seeing the flames and feeling the heat, the women and children began screaming, but the king, observing events from his palace tower, just laughed: "You have eaten my good food, now get warm!"

But the Lord, Dievas, heard the people's cries, and their calls for Heaven's vengeance. A strike of thunder from Perkunas, and the castle sank into the depths of the earth, and in that place a large lake appeared.

But no one perished in the flames - not the women, nor the children, nor the cruel king. The Lord changed them to beautiful birds -- swallows -- and the merciless king, into a predatory hawk.

That's why swallows, even to this day, hate hawks. Though they are small and powerless, as soon as they spy a hawk, they fall upon him in a group, screeching, chasing him, until, tired and unable to do anything else, the hawk hides himself from them. So the cruel king still has no peace, always hearing complaints and ill wishes.

Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien

Gloria Kivytaite O'Brien is a frequent contributor to Bridges. She grew up in Brooklyn, Annunciation Parish. Gloria can be contacted at Senaboba@aol.com.

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Calendar of Events for May, June, July/Aug, 2009

Please verify all events as places & times are subject to change.

MAY

May 3, 2009 - 3:00 pm-Mother's Day Celebration & Pancake Supper
Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall, 1151 S. Galena St.,
Denver, CO 80247 (just west of Mississippi & Havana)
Info: Romas Zableckas. Sponsor: Colorado Chapter of the LAC

May 10, 2009 - Mother's Day Celebration - Following 9:00 am Mass
Holy Trinity parish hall, 53 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT
Sponsor: Hartford LAC Chapter - Info: Viktoras Kogelis, Chair
danute@juno.com

May 15-16, 2009 - JBANC 8th Baltic Conference
The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) will
hold its eighth conference in Washington, DC. Focus on Baltic
security issues. The President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers has been
invited to give the keynote address at the conference on
Saturday, May 16. The main conference venue will be the
Renaissance M St. Hotel in Washington, DC - located at 1143
New Hampshire Ave. A briefing & reception with the U.S.
Congress or Administration is also planned for **Friday, May 15.**
Additional info. about the conference, including registration info.,
will be available shortly on JBANC's website: <http://jbanc.org>.
For any questions related to the conference, contact JBANC
jbanc@jbanc.org (tel.) 301-908-2579

May 16, 2009, Saturday, 9am-2pm - New Date
3rd Annual Flea Market
St. Andrew Lithuanian RC Church, 1930 Wallace St., Phila., PA
Time to do Spring Cleaning & contribute unused items to
support the parish. For info: Roma rkroma@aol.com

May 19, 2009 - 7 to 9 pm - Lithuanian Amber Roots Heritage Club
Lithuanian Music Hall, Culture Center,
2715 E.Allegheny Ave., Phila. Pa. Please use left side door.
For info: Millie Helt 610-497-5469 or milliemarks@aol.com

May 30-31, 2009 - 11 am - 6 pm - 37th Annual Lithuanian Festival
Catonsville Armory, 130 Mellor Ave., Catonsville, MD
Theme-One Thousand Years of Culture Local ethnic dancgroups
& entertainment, jewelry, arts & crafts. Historical exhibits,
Delicious Lithuanian food.
Admission: \$4 per person, children under 12 free
Info: Maryte Patlaba 410-646-0261

JUNE

June 5-7, 2009 - ANNUAL TALKA WORK WEEKEND
roll up your sleeves & help get Neringa in shape for the
coming camp season. Please inform vida@neringa.org
if you will be able to attend.

June 6, 2009 - SPRING FLING, 8 am - 2 pm
Indoor & outdoor Flea Market - Crafts & Vendors,
Food, Raffles, Children's Activities & more
3603 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Sponsor: Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
www.osfprov.org 412-885-7232

June 7, 2009 - 1 pm - 3 pm - Annual Meeting - The LAC Cape Cod
Chapter will hold elections for the current year's chapter board.
All members are urged to attend. Please allow time to eat lunch
before the meeting.
Old Country Buffet, Festival Mall, Route 132, Hyannis, MA 02601
Sponsor: Cape Cod Chapter of the LAC

June 7, 2009 - 12:30 pm - Annual "Indoor Picnic"
Maironis Park, 52 So. Quinsigamond Ave., Shrewsbury, MA.
Lithuanian dinner. Free admission. Everyone is welcome.
Knights of Lithuania, Council 26 Contact: mociuteviv@aol.com

June 12, 13, 14, 2009 - Knights of Lithuania, New England District,
Annual Retreat at the Franciscan Monastery,
28 Beach Ave., Kennebunkport MA.
With Rev. Msgr. Albert Contons as Retreat Master.
Reserve early. info: mociuteviv@aol.com

June 13, 2009
Roslyn Lithuanian Cemetery Monument Dedication.
All day event in the City of Roslyn WA. The program will start
with the Reenacting of an actual 1906 Lithuanian Coal Miner's
funeral. Placing of wreaths at the two new Lithuanian
Monuments. Blessing by the Clergy, Dedication speech with
short introduction of descendants who are present, Folk
dancing, tours of the Coal mine & Lithuanian life. Banquet with
Lithuanian folk songs, Power point show and introductions to
the Local Lithuanian History from 1900's who arrived in
Washington State. Ending the evening will be a Dance
Lithuanian style. Lithuanian/English language Mass is also being
planned. Over night accommodations at local Hotels will be
reserved & announce in the near future. The entire event will be
filmed by one if not more different groups. Prior to this event will
be a Talka (Barn raising) actually it will be a fence raising for the
Lithuanian Cemetery in Roslyn, to prepare the Lithuanian
Cemetery for the June 13th Dedication. Volunteers from the
Portland and Seattle Lithuanian communities will be joined by
descendants of the Lithuanian Cemetery. Work, food & song
will be allowed!

June 14, 2009 - Holy Mass 10:30 am - Day Of Hope & Sorrow
Our Lady of the Assumption church,

76 Wianno Avenue, Osterville, MA 02655.
Let us come & pray for those Lithuanians
who have died in the Soviet Gulags.
Sponsor: Cape Cod Chapter of the LAC
Commemoration of the Deportations

June 14, 2009 - Sunday, Commemoration of the Deportations
After the 9:00 am Mass Holy Trinity parish hall, Hartford, CT
Sponsor: Hartford LAC Chapter Info: Viktoras Kogelis, Chair

June 16, 2009 - 7 to 9 pm - Lithuanian Amber Roots Heritage Club
Lithuanian Music Hall,
Culture Center - 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Phila., PA
Please use left side door.
Info: Millie Helt 610-497-5469 milliemarks@aol.com

June 20-27, 2009 - Lithuanian Language Courses
Camp Dainava, Manchester, MI
One week intensive courses under the auspices of the
Lithuanian Educational Council of the USA. Designed for
beginners, intermediate & advanced students or those
wishing to refresh their language skills. Taught by experienced
instructors in vacation like surroundings. No limitations
regarding age or formal education.
Info: Ausrele Sakalaite, 1388 Overton Dr., Lemont, IL. 60439
630-243-6302 E-mail Ausreles@comcast.net

JULY


July 3 - 4, 2009 - NERINGA TURNS 40
Neringa's on-site birthday celebration
(aside from celebrating at every camp).
See the 40th birthday party information at www.neringa.org
for a registration form and details on the program as they become
available. If you can't make it to Vermont, be sure to join in the
celebration at Putnam during the annual picnic.

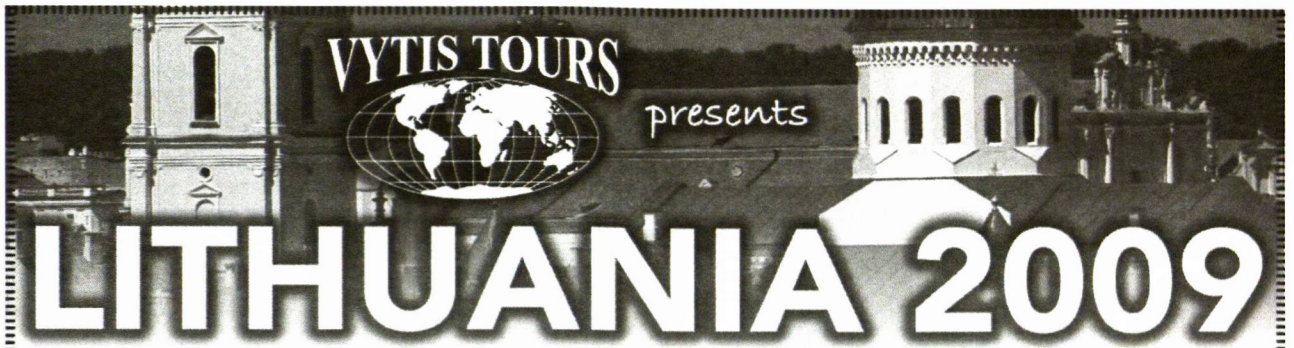
July 26, 2009 - Putnam Picnic
(600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, CT 06260)

AUGUST

August 6 - 9, 2009
96th National Convention Knights of Lithuania, Oak Brook, IL
Hosted by Council 16, Chicago, IL

August 15 - 16, 2009
95th Lithuanian Days - Food, vendors & fun for all
Lithuanian Textiles will be featured this year
Schuykill Mall, Frackville, PA
Sponsor: Knights of Lithuania Council 144

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78 Mark Twain Dr., Hamilton Sq., NJ 08690



May 9 -10 and 16 -17
LAC National Elections
May 10 - Mother's Day
May 25 - Memorial Day (observed)

Lithuanian-American Community



CONTACT INFORMATION:

WEBSITE

WWW.LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN.ORG

TELEPHONE

800-625-1170

LAC, Inc. NATIONAL ELECTIONS

May 9-10 and 16-17, 2009

For more information, contact your local LAC chapter or the national election commission by email at tarybosrinkimai2009@gmail.com

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Donate your car, boat, truck, RV, Jet Ski or snowmobile to Lithuanian-American Community, Inc, and receive a tax deduction. This no cost, no hassle process begins when you contact our fundraising partner, DONATION LINE LLC at 877-227-4787. Make sure to ask for our extension, 2430. Or you can go to the website: www.donationline.com and complete the Vehicle Donation Form on line. Make sure to select Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. from the drop down list. Please have your title in hand when you donate.